

A Review of the Achievements of the First Three Five Year Plans (1951-65)*

In the educational situation as it existed in the country in 1951, it is obvious that the highest priority had to be given to programmes of transformation of the educational system and relating it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people. It is naive to assume that all education is necessarily good, either for the individual or for society and that it will necessarily lead to progress. A good system of education tuned properly to national life, needs and aspirations can be the most potent instrument of national development. But an educational system that is inappropriate or unsuited to national needs can become a great impediment to progress and may even take the country down-hill. Equally urgent is the need to raise standards in education because the progress of a country depends ultimately upon the

quality of men and women who come out of the schools and colleges year after year and this, in turn, depends upon the quality of education provided in them. But unfortunately both these programmes received a lower priority and this has been the major weakness of our planning. On the other hand, the highest emphasis was placed on expansion of educational facilities at all stages and in all sectors and on the creation of a greater equality of educational opportunity. These may, therefore, be regarded as the principal achievements of our educational planning.

The following table shows the expansion of educational facilities during the first three Five Year Plans:

TABLE I
Growth of Enrolments (1950-66)

(In thousands)

	1950-51	1955-56	1960-61	1965-66	Average Annual Rate of Growth%
Pre-Primary	5,177 (18.3)	7,135 (21.3)	8,612 (22.3)	11,773 (26.7)	5.6
Lower Primary (I-IV)	13,651 (37.8)	17,380 (42.6)	24,996 (54.8)	37,090 (69.2)	6.9
Higher Primary (V-VII)	3,228 (13.0)	4,592 (16.5)	7,463 (24.3)	12,549 (35.6)	9.5
Lower Secondary (VIII-X)					
General	1,461	2,300	3,582	5,990	9.9
Vocational	46	70	100	137	7.5
Total	1,507 (6.5)	2,370 (9.3)	3,682 (13.1)	6,127 (19.1)	9.8
Higher Secondary (XI-XII)					
General	157	288	491	834	11.8
Vocational	125	214	358	564	10.5
Total	282 (1.9)	502 (3.1)	849 (4.9)	1,398 (7.0)	11.3
Undergraduate					
General	191	322	434	759	9.6
Professional	50	82	147	227	10.6
Total	241 (1.2)	404 (1.8)	581 (2.4)	986 (3.6)	9.8
Postgraduate					
General and professional	22 (0.1)	35 (0.2)	64 (0.3)	208 (0.4)	11.2
TOTAL	24,108	32,419	46,247	70,031	7.4

Source : Report of the Education Commission (1964-66), page 589

Notes : (1) Totals do not tally because of rounding.

(2) The figures in parenthesis indicate the percentage of population in corresponding age-groups.

(3) Enrolment figures at the pre-primary stage include those in class I in States where eleven years are required to reach the matriculation standard which is reached in ten years in others.

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It will be seen that the total enrolments in the country have increased from 24 million in 1950 to 70 million in 1965, the average annual rate of growth being as high as 7.4 per cent. There is no parallel to this expansion in the earlier history of this country, and even in the contemporary world, this record would be equalled by only a few countries, if any. Some aspects of this unprecedented educational expansion deserve notice :

Inevitability: It may be pointed out that this expansion was, in a way, inevitable. In 1951, the level of existing facilities for education was extremely limited. The attainment of independence had created a great hunger for education, especially, among those classes which had been denied it in the past. Moreover, it is next to impossible to resist such popular pressures in a democratic society based on adult franchise.

Egalitarian urge: It must also be recognised that this expansion has played a dynamic part in the transformation of Indian society, which is essentially unequal, where wealth and rank enjoy many privileges while the handicaps of the under-privileged are numerous, and where occupational mobility is small and employment opportunities neither ample nor diversified. In such a society, it is only educational opportunity that can be relatively equalised by public policy. This expansion has, therefore, created new opportunities for several depressed groups and thrown up new leaderships and bands of workers. These developments have, on the whole, been beneficial and helped in creating a more evenly balanced economy and society.

Expansion at the postgraduate stage: Special mention must be made of the more rapid expansion at the post graduate stage (11.2 per cent per year). This has been one of the best results of educational planning and in this, the University Grants Commission created in 1965 and financed by the Central Government has played a very significant role. This stage was emphasized for the obvious reason that it is a crucial sector of 'seed' value which can fertilise the whole field of education and help in raising standards. An improvement of this stage creates good teachers for colleges and helps to improve the quality of higher education. This, in turn, gives good teachers for secondary schools where standards improve; and finally, it results in getting good secondary school graduates as teachers for primary schools to improve standards therein.

Expansion slower than expected or needed in certain sectors: In spite of the very large over-all rate of expansion, it has to be pointed out that in some sectors, the expansion has not been as fast as one would have liked; for instance, the expansion at the primary stage, rapid as it is, has not met either

the popular expectations or the Constitutional directive which laid down that free and compulsory education should be provided, by 1960, for all children till they reach the age of fourteen years. Here the difficulties have arisen partly from the growth of population, partly from cultural, economic, physical and social factors and partly for lack of resources. Similarly, in spite of the tremendous increase in facilities achieved during this period, the expansion of vocational and professional education (7.5 per cent per year at the secondary stage and 10.6 per cent per year at the undergraduate stage) has not been able to keep pace with the demands for trained manpower. There is still a shortage of engineers and doctors; and the shortages of middle-level manpower in industry and of all agricultural personnel are greater still.

Expansion faster than expected or needed in certain sectors: In two sectors—general secondary education and undergraduate education in the liberal arts,—the expansion achieved has been even faster than what was expected or needed, and has created several problems. As stated earlier, the post-war plan of educational development in India had proposed an extremely restricted policy of expansion in these sectors. Although this was not desirable, it was generally felt that expansion in these sectors has to be controlled to some extent to prevent large-scale increases in the number of educated unemployed. In spite of a general acceptance of this policy, the State Governments found it very difficult to resist public pressures and both these sectors expanded at a tremendous rate (9.9 per cent at the lower secondary stage, 11.8 per cent at the higher secondary stage, and 9.6 per cent at the undergraduate stage). This was due to several reasons such as the traditional social status attached to a university degree; the growing hunger for education among the people, the disappearance of the old 'job values' attached to primary education which makes secondary education the 'minimum' and higher education the 'optimum' qualification for any worthwhile job; the absence of adequate employment opportunities for young persons so that many of them are forced to go in for secondary or university education simply because they have nothing else to do; the increasing provision which is being made by State Governments for free secondary education and for the liberal grant of free studentships, stipends and scholarships at the university stage; and a rapid multiplication of educational institutions at this level which has made them easily accessible to young persons in thousands of small and out of the way places. Whatever the reasons, the results of this expansion have been mixed. It has given access to higher education to several social groups which did not have it in the past. At the same time it has made the problem of educated unemployment more complex and difficult and indirectly led to some lowering of standards.

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One point needs mention in this context. In the case of a family, for instance, a minimum expenditure is necessary to provide for the basic amenities or luxuries or cultural advancement. In the Indian situation, a similar relationship holds between expansion on the one hand and programmes of qualitative improvement on the other. In a democracy based on adult franchise, the demand of the people for consumer goods—and education is becoming increasingly an extremely important consumer good—is difficult to be resisted beyond a certain limit so that a minimum expansion becomes inescapable. For instance, an expansion of about 2 or 2.5 per cent per year is needed merely to keep pace with the growth of population. A similar expansion is needed to clear up the backlog of under-development and an equal expansion would be needed in addition to meet the continually increasing hunger for education. Consequently, an expansion of at least 6 to 7 per cent per year is unavoidable and the funds required for this will have to be provided. It is only the amount over and above this minimum need—the disposable surplus—that can be allocated to programmes of qualitative improvement or internal transformation. It has, therefore, often happened that the first version of the educational plan started with a fairly big allocation in which adequate funds were provided both for quantitative expansion and qualitative improvement. But when these funds were reduced for a variety of reasons, there was an upper limit to the cut which could be made in programmes of expansion; and consequently, the axe had to fall very largely on the vital programmes of qualitative improvement. The only way out of the situation seems to be to accord a higher priority to education and to obtain large allocations. The other alternative of resisting the public demand for expansion is easy to prescribe. But it would be as

difficult to follow as the proverbial belling of the cat.

Equalisation of educational opportunities:— Equally outstanding has been the progress made in the first three Five Year Plans in reducing the sharp inequalities of educational opportunity that existed in 1951. The opportunities for free education have been considerably expanded. Elementary education is free or very largely free in all parts of the country. Two States provide free secondary education also and in others, liberal free-studentships are available at the secondary stage. In two States even higher education is free. There is considerable provision for supply of free books and some provision for ancillary services like school meals and school health. The scholarship programme was extremely small in 1947. It has now expanded immensely and about seven per cent of the total educational expenditure is incurred on student aid. The inequalities of development at the State and district levels have been reduced to some extent and the educational gap between urban and rural areas has been somewhat bridged. There has been a large increase in the provision of facilities for education of the handicapped children; and the under-privileged groups like the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes are now taking increasingly to education. One important programme which has been successfully implemented is to promote higher education among these groups by providing a scholarship to almost every student who completes the secondary school and desires to study further.

It may be of interest to give details of the extent to which the gap in the education of boys and girls has been reduced during this period. This will be seen from the following table:

TABLE 2
Enrolment of Girls (1951-66)

	1950-51	1955-56	1960-61	1965-66 (Estimated.)
1. Classes I-V				
(1) Total enrolment (in 000's)	5,385	7,639	11,401	18,145
(2) No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled	39	44	48	55
(3) Proportion of girls in mixed schools to total enrolment of girls (percentage)	74.8	79.2	82.1	85.0
2. Classes VI-VIII				
(1) Total enrolment (in 000's)	534	867*	1,630	2,839
(2) No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled	21	25	32	35
(3) Proportion of girls in mixed schools to total enrolment of girls (percentage)	26.7	51.8	68.9	78.0
3. Classes IX-XI				
(1) Total enrolment (in 000's)	163	320	541	1,069
(2) No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled	15	21	23	26
(3) Proportion of girls in mixed schools to total enrolment of girls (percentage)	21.0	29.7	36.4	40.0
4. University Stage (General Education).				
(1) Total enrolment (in 000's)	40	84	150	271
(2) No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled.	14	17	23	24
(3) Proportion of girls in mixed institutions to total enrolment of girls (percentage)	56.0	53.1	50.2	48.2
5. Professional Courses (Collegiate Standard)				
(1) Total enrolment (in 000's)	5	9	26	50
(2) No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled	5	7	11	14

Source : Report of the Education Commission (1964-66), page 136.

It will be seen that the rate of expansion of the education of girls has been faster than that of the boys and the gap between them and the boys is being slowly but steadily bridged.

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Programmes of qualitative improvement:

Although programmes of qualitative improvement and internal transformation of the educational system to relate it intimately to the life, needs and aspirations of the people were given a lower priority during this period, it would be wrong to assume that they were neglected altogether or to accept, at its face value, the oft-repeated statement that educational standards have seriously gone down. The truth is that this has also been a mixed picture of light and shade, of certain achievements in some sectors and of several short-falls in others.

I may begin this discussion with teachers on whom, in the last analysis, depends the quality of education. Throughout the world, the general expe-

rience has been that, as the material rewards of teachers are elevated, it becomes possible to recruit into the profession individuals of a continually improving quality and with more extended professional training; and in proportion as the competence, integrity and dedication of teachers has increased, society has been increasingly willing—and justifiably so—to give greater recognition to their material and economic status. A similar development has taken place in India during the last fifteen years and may take place on an accelerated scale in the years ahead. The following table shows the improvement in the salaries of teachers effected during this period :

TABLE 3
*Average Annual Salaries of Teachers in
India (1950-51 To 1955-66)*

Type of Institutions	Average Annual Salary of Teachers (at Current Prices) in				Average Annual Salary in 1965-66 at 1950-51 Prices
	1950-51 Rs.	1955-56 Rs.	1960-61 Rs.	1965-66 Rs.	
<i>A. Higher Education</i>					
1. University departments	3,759 (100)	5,546 (145)	5,475 (146)	6,500 (173)	3,939 (105)
2. Colleges of arts and science . . .	2,696 (100)	3,070 (114)	3,659 (136)	4,000 (148)	2,424 (90)
3. Professional colleges.	3,948 (100)	3,861 (93)	4,237 (107)	6,410 (162)	3,885 (98)
<i>B. Schools</i>					
4. Secondary schools.	1,258 (100)	1,427 (113)	1,681 (134)	1,959 (156)	1,187 (94)
5. Higher primary schools	682 (100)	809 (119)	1,058 (155)	1,228 (180)	741 (109)
6. Lower primary schools	545 (100)	652 (120)	873 (160)	1,046 (192)	634 (116)
7. Pre-primary schools	914 (100)	770 (84)	925 (101)	1,803 (118)	656 (72)
8. Vocational schools	1,705 (100)	1,569 (92)	2,041 (120)	2,887 (169)	1,750 (103)
All Teachers	769 (100)	919 (120)	1,218 (158)	1,476 (192)	895 (116)
9. Cost of living index for working classes.	100	95	123	165	...
10. National income per head of popula- tion (at current prices).	267 (100)	255 (96)	326 (122)	424 (159)	...

Source : Report of the Education Commission (1964-66), page 47

N.B. The figures within brackets give the index of growth on the basis of 1950-51=100

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It will be seen that there has been considerable improvement in the remuneration of teachers although a part of it has been off-set by the rise in prices. Of course, this could and should have been better. Their general education and professional training have also improved, partly as a result of the improvement in remuneration, partly because of the expansion of educational facilities and partly because of the special efforts made to raise qualifications, provide professional training and introduce better selection procedures for teachers of all categories.

At the institutional level, it is possible to say that the number of good institutions has increased considerably. But this advantage has been off-set by an increase in the number of institutions which function at a substandard level also. In particular, a large proportion of the new institutions that have come up during this period in response to popular demand tend to be small and uneconomic in size and badly planned with regard to their location. There is obvious need to plan the location of educational institutions on proper lines to avoid overlapping and duplication and to promote the creation of institutions of optimum size which tend to be more economic and efficient. An Educational Survey of the entire country was, therefore, carried out to assist in this programme (1957-59). It has been able to influence public policies to some extent but a good deal is still left to be desired. A second Educational Survey has, therefore, been undertaken recently (1965) and it is proposed to take more vigorous steps to see to it that its recommendations are more rigorously implemented in practice.

At the level of educational programmes, it has been possible to carry out several improvements. For instance, the teaching of science has improved to some extent and the facilities provided for it have increased, both in secondary and higher education. Several attempts have also been made to improve curricula and teaching materials, to adopt better methods of teaching and to implement some reforms in the examination system. But the over-all impact of all these measures is far too inadequate and has failed to make any significant change in the traditional system of teaching and evaluation. This is due to several reasons. The allocation of inadequate resources is obviously an important cause. When allowance is made for the rise in prices, it is found that the investment in the different sections of education has, by and large, hardly been able to keep pace with the increase in enrolments. Consequently, the per capita facilities available to students in a large proportion of educational institutions have decreased, rather than increased, in real terms. Another important factor has been the failure to overcome traditional resistances amongst the teachers and administrators who have not shown any great eagerness to innovate and to experiment and have largely contented themselves to move in the old familiar beaten tracks. Of still greater significance has been the failure to utilise

even the existing facilities in an intensive manner and to create a climate of hard work and dedication. It is here that one comes across a curious paradox. The industrially advanced countries command large financial and material resources so that they can afford less intensive utilization and need not work very hard to obtain good results. Their material assets can compensate for human failures. On the other hand, the developing countries have to make up their shortfalls in financial and material resources through human efforts. Their need for hard work, dedication and intensive utilization of available resources is, therefore, far greater. Unfortunately, it is precisely in these countries that one finds inadequate or wasteful utilization of existing resources, poorer motivation and less intensive work. To change this human situation is probably the most important problem to be faced in the educational planning in developing countries.

At the level of students, there is enough evidence to show that the number of first-rate students is much larger now than at any time in the past. At the same time, the number of ill-motivated students with sub-standard attainments has increased, especially because there is a large rush of first-generation learners whose special needs are not being adequately taken care of at present. Consequently, the serious problems of wastage and stagnation still continue to dominate the scene; and some weaknesses of the system, particularly student unrest in higher education, may even be said to have been accentuated.

The present situation in respect of educational standards is obviously too unsatisfactory to leave any room for complacency. At the same time, it is not fair to over-simplify the problem, go to the other extreme and roundly assert that the standards have deteriorated. Such a statement would do great injustice to that small band of teachers and institutions who have struggled hard to maintain standards in the face of heavy odds and whose achievements enable us to face the task ahead with confidence. A more balanced view would be that the present standards of education, irrespective of the fact whether they have risen or fallen in any given institution or sector, are inadequate to meet the national needs, that the gap between these standards and those in the developed countries have become wider during the last 20 years because the advanced countries have made tremendous progress while nothing comparable to it has been seen in the developing nations, and that these standards could have been much better, if even the existing facilities had been intensively utilized and a climate of hard work and dedication had been created.

Educational expenditure: Before this review of educational developments in the first three Five Year Plans is closed, I shall briefly refer to the growth of total educational expenditure. This is shown in the following table:

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TABLE 4

Total Educational Expenditure in India (1950-51 to 1965-66)

Item of Expenditure	1950-51	1955-56	1960-61	1965-66 Estimated
1. Total educational expenditure from all sources (Rs. in millions)	1,444	1,897	3,444	6,000
2. Index of growth	100	166	301	524
3. Educational expenditure per capita (Rs.)	3.2	4.8	7.8	12.1
4. Index of growth	100	150	244	378
5. Total national income (at current prices) (Rs. in millions)	95,300	99,800	141,000	210,000
6. Index of growth	100	105	148	220
7. National income per capita (at current prices)	266.5	255.0	325.7	424.4
8. Index of growth	100	96	122	159
9. Total educational expenditure as percentage of national income	1.2	1.9	2.4	2.9
10. Index of growth	100	158	200	242
	First Plan	Second Plan	Third Plan	All Three Plans
11. Average annual rate of growth of total educational expenditure (percentage)	10.6%	12.7%	11.8%	11.7%

Source : Report of the Education Commission 1964-66, page 465

It will be seen that educational expenditure (at current prices) has increased from Rs. 1,444 million in 1950 to Rs. 6,000 million in 1965, at 11.7 per cent per year. This is about 2.2 times the rate of growth of national income and 1.6 times the rate of growth of enrolments. Most of this expenditure came from Government funds—Central and State—whose contribution increased from 57 per cent in 1950 to 71 per cent in 1965. The contributions of all other sources declined—from 20 to 15 per cent. The local funds from 11 to 6 per cent and private

sources such as donations and contributions from 12 to 7 per cent.

The analysis of this expenditure according to objects is given in Table No. 5. It will be seen therefrom that the expenditure on all sectors of higher education has increased rapidly. Most of the expenditures incurred on buildings, scholarship and hostels also fall in the sector on higher education. The expenditure on school education which has been a comparatively neglected sector was, on the whole, on the low side.

TABLE 5

Growth of Expenditure on Education in India (1950-51 to 1965-66)

Type of Institution	1950-51	1955-56	1960-61	1965-66	Average Annual Rate of Growth %
(Rs. in 000's)					
Universities	49,052 (4.3)	79,804 (4.2)	141,389 (4.1)	270,000 (4.5)	12.0
Research institutions	6,256 (0.5)	13,904 (0.7)	26,986 (0.8)	65,000 (1.1)	16.0
Colleges for arts and science	71,714 (6.3)	116,474 (6.1)	209,153 (6.1)	327,500 (5.5)	10.0
Colleges for professional education	42,194 (3.7)	70,008 (3.7)	158,041 (4.6)	350,000 (5.8)	15.0

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TABLE 5
Growth of Expenditure on Education in India 1950-51 to 1965-66 (contd.)

Type of Institutions	1950-51	1955-56	1960-61	1965-66	Average Annual Rate of Growth %
	(Rs. in 000's)				
Colleges for special education. . . .	2,224 (0.2)	3,636 (0.2)	9,125 (0.3)	17,500 (0.3)	14.7
Boards of intermediate education. . . .	5,338 (0.5)	13,240 (0.7)	24,133 (0.7)	45,000 (0.8)	15.3
Secondary schools	230,450 (20.1)	376,114 (19.8)	689,117 (20.0)	1,181,000 (19.7)	11.5
Higher primary schools	76,990 (6.7)	154,050 (8.1)	429,219 (12.5)	717,500 (12.0)	16.0
Lower primary schools	364,843 (31.9)	537,272 (28.3)	734,461 (21.3)	1,220,500 (20.3)	8.4
Pre-primary schools	1,198 (0.1)	2,499 (0.1)	5,873 (0.2)	11,000 (2.0)	15.9
Vocational schools	36,944 (3.2)	54,508 (2.9)	114,091 (3.3)	250,000 (4.0)	13.1
Special schools	23,335 (2.0)	26,529 (1.4)	31,997 (0.9)	39,920 (0.7)	3.6
Total (Direct)	910,539 (79.6)	1,448,069 (76.4)	2,573,587 (74.7)	4,494,920 (74.9)	11.2
Direction and inspection	27,364 (2.4)	40,006 (2.1)	70,123 (2.0)	114,009 (1.9)	10.0
Buildings and equipment	99,270 (8.7)	196,358 (10.4)	428,158 (12.4)	666,055 (11.1)	13.5
Scholarships	34,456 (3.0)	82,172 (4.3)	200,222 (5.8)	420,035 (7.0)	18.1
Hostels	18,264 (1.6)	26,610 (1.4)	43,149 (1.3)	95,463 (1.6)	11.7
Miscellaneous	53,928 (4.7)	103,395 (5.4)	128,562 (3.8)	209,518 (3.5)	9.5
TOTAL (Indirect)	233,282 (20.4)	448,541 (23.6)	870,214 (25.3)	1,505,080 (25.1)	13.2
GRAND TOTAL	1,143,821 (100.0)	1,896,610 (100.0)	3,443,801 (100.0)	6,000,000 (100.0)	11.7

Source : Ministry of Education, Form A

Note : The figures in the parentheses indicate the percentages to total.